

ST MATTHEW

CATHOLIC CHURCH AND NEWMAN CENTER



August 13, 2021

Dear Parishioners,

As much as I would like to be writing to you to proclaim an end of the Covid-19 pandemic, the virus continues to persist in the Statesboro community and indeed the entire world. Along with our staff and lay leaders, I continue to monitor the best practices given by the medical community and to seek advice from local physicians that allow us to worship and fellowship as safely as possible. We have not seen a change in the recommendations on distancing yet. However, I would still encourage households to maintain a three foot distance within a single pew. It is recommended that masks be worn in crowded indoor environments. Recently, we stocked up on disposable masks and will have those available at every entrance to the church. Hand sanitizer will also be readily available at the entrances and at stations along the Communion procession.

Regarding the morality of vaccines, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued this statement: *"All vaccinations recognized as clinically safe and effective can be used in good conscience with the certain knowledge that the use of such vaccines does not constitute formal cooperation with the abortion from which the cells used in production of the vaccines derive" ... "the morality of vaccination depends not only on the duty to protect one's own health, but also on the duty to pursue the common good." ... "In the absence of other means to stop or even prevent the epidemic, the common good may recommend vaccination, especially to protect the weakest and most exposed.* (Note on the Morality of using some Vaccines, Dec. 21, 2020)"

For Hospitality Sunday and the upcoming Parish Nite, I would like to request one household/extended household (i.e. roommates, homeschool cooperative) per table. The children's bible story and activities will be OUTDOORS to help with spacing and transmission concerns. Our fall planning is underway and we are well aware of the need to plan for the unexpected. As we plan, we come back to the fundamental question that is the mission of ALL Christians: "What are the things that will bring people to God?" For those who are unable to attend worship or faith formation classes in person, we are working on alternatives. Please pray that our mission to draw others to the light of Christ will be fulfilled, under the guidance of God our Father and that the Holy Spirit will allow us to use our gifts to his glory, no matter the circumstances.

For those of you who are unable to attend Mass in larger groups indoors due to medical conditions, we would ask you to prayerfully consider attending Mass on Tuesday or Thursday. In order to offer an environment to accommodate those concerns, we will once again require masks for those who attend the Tuesday and Thursday daily Mass, which we had previously reserved for those in the at-risk community. While there is no substitute for receiving Jesus in the Eucharist or being a part of the parish community face-to-face, we will continue to offer the 10:30 am Mass via livestream each week for those who are immunocompromised, are ill, or homebound. The plan is also to livestream all or as many of our faith formation talks, guest speakers, etc. as possible.

If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns, please contact me at jjohnson@diosav.org or at the parish office: 912-681-6726 ext. 213. I encourage you to keep the dignity of every human person in mind in making decisions that are best for you and your family. Please keep our healthcare and other front-line workers in your prayers along with those who are ill with Covid-19. Also, I ask your continued prayers for an end to the pandemic and the consolation of those who have suffered or lost loved ones due to Covid-19.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Fr. John R. Johnson, VF
Pastor